

# ABS Pricing Policy

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### Introduction

Open access to official statistics on the economic and social condition of a country and its population is an essential element of a democracy. The ABS attaches considerable importance to easy and widespread access by all levels of governments, and the community generally, to the statistics it compiles.

### Objectives

ABS Pricing Policy follows the latest government guidelines on cost recovery by information agencies, currently contained in **Commonwealth Cost Recovery Guidelines, July 2005 (Guidelines)**

(Please note that the links below will take you to documents on the Department of Finance and Deregulation website: <http://www.finance.gov.au>)

### **Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines (Financial Management Guidance No. 4)**

[Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines PDF version](#) [462 KB]

[Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines RTF version](#) [3.5 MB]

and **Australian Government Competitive Neutrality Guidelines for Managers, February 2004 (CNG)**.

### **Australian Government Competitive Neutrality Guidelines for Managers (Financial Management Guidance No. 9)**

[Competitive Neutrality Guidelines PDF version](#) [587 KB]

[Competitive Neutrality Guidelines RTF version](#) [1.9 MB]

[Competitive Neutrality Guidelines ZIP version](#) [163 KB]

### **Corrigendum issued on 30 April 2004 regarding the example on page 20**

[Corrigendum regarding the example on page 20 PDF version](#) [50 KB]

[Corrigendum regarding the example on page 20 RTF version](#) [64 KB]

### **Community Service Obligations (CSO)**

To meet its CSO for statistics, publications, either in HTML or PDF format, and associated publication tables, are available via self service at no charge on the ABS web site.

More detailed Census data is also available via self help at no charge from the ABS web site or from libraries. The Australian media is provided with free access to a wide selection of more detailed statistics also at no charge. Simple inquiries for data from the public to the ABS are handled free of charge. These free products and services comprise the ABS **Basic Information Set**.

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### **Pricing Practices**

Users wanting information or services that are beyond that provided by the **Basic Information Set** are required to pay relevant costs, including overheads, incurred beyond the costs of collection and production

of clean unit record files from which the information is produced.  
ABS Pricing Policy provides for three bases for setting prices:

- pricing based on marginal costs for the additional dissemination of the Basic Information Set;
- pricing based on incremental costs for products and services additional to the Basic Information Set; and,
- "commercial" pricing, based on competitive neutrality principles, for products and services which could compete with similar products provided by the private sector.

In addition, while strongly encouraging secondary provision of ABS data, the ABS will recover the cost of dissemination and product creation from providers of ABS information. It will also recover from them the costs of compliance with licensing conditions.

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## **ABS Pricing Principles**

The principles underpinning ABS Pricing Policy are set out below.

### **Principle 1**

ABS is committed to open access to official statistics by all levels of governments, and the community generally.

### **Principle 2**

ABS will provide free access channels to the **Basic Information Set** funded by appropriation.

### **Principle 3**

The ABS will recover the costs of accessing the Basic Information Set via non-free access channels (e.g. print on demand) on a marginal cost basis.

### **Principle 4**

Where cost effective to do so, the ABS will recover the costs of producing and providing information products and services that are additional to the Basic Information Set, including salaries, operating and capital costs and associated overheads, from users.

### **Principle 5**

The ABS will recover the costs of products and services provided in addition to the Basic Information Set, on an incremental cost basis for those which only the ABS can provide (e.g. due to confidentiality considerations), and on a commercial cost basis, for those which may compete with products and services provided by other suppliers.

### **Principle 6**

The ABS will set its pricing policy, in conformity with Government guidelines on Cost Recovery and Competitive Cost Neutrality, with a view to :

- relieving the general taxpayer of those elements of the cost of the statistical service which have a specific and identifiable value to particular users;
- enabling the demand for ABS products and services to be used as one indicator of how ABS resources should be used; and
- encouraging users to address their real needs for ABS statistical products.

### **Principle 7**

The ABS strongly encourages secondary provision of ABS data, and will recover the cost of dissemination and product creation from providers of ABS information. It will also recover from them the costs of compliance with licensing conditions.

### **Principle 8**

The ABS provides technical assistance to international agencies and other countries. Wherever possible it will use the applicable AusAID pricing schedule, which approximates charging on a marginal cost basis. Exceptions apply in the following situations:

- where the work is tendered in a competitive situation, the ABS will quote on a commercial cost basis;
- where international agencies have their own standard rates, the ABS may choose to apply those rates; and
- consistent with our international policy, ABS may partially recover, or waive, its costs for statistical work associated with international engagement if it is a strategically important initiative that the ABS has decided to support, and/or there are important staff development opportunities .

### **Principle 9**

The Australian Statistician or his delegate may, where public interest issues are involved, decide to charge products and services on other bases.

### **Principle 10**

In all cases where costs are recovered, the ABS will charge "efficient costs" i.e. the minimum costs necessary to deliver products and services that are fit for purpose.

### **Principle 11**

ABS will use simple and cost effective pricing schedules and administrative systems.

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## **Products and Services Included in the Basic Information Set**

- Contents of the ABS web site
- Collection activities, statistical analysis and processing of surveys to final unit record file, including confidentialised unit record files (CURFs)
- Limited consultancy service to media and Parliamentarians
- Media lock up services
- Access to statistics by members of the ABS' Australian Statistical Advisory Council
- Access to statistics by clients with disabilities
- Access to statistics by survey respondents compiled from surveys they participated in
- Training on products and services in the BIS
- **National Information Referral Service (NIRS)**
- **Email notification service** (web based)

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### **More information**

For further information, contact :

- the Director, Client Services
- e-mail: [client.services@abs.gov.au](mailto:client.services@abs.gov.au)
- phone: 1300 135 070

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## **Revisions to the ABS Pricing Policy**

This revision of the ABS Pricing Policy has been prompted by the requirement for alignment with new **Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines** (Guidelines). The draft revision also reflects the recent move by ABS to make the content of its website accessible free-of-charge via the Internet. The ABS' proposed changes to the pricing policy are available in:

**1399.0 - Discussion paper: ABS Pricing Policy Review Outcomes - Public Consultation, 2006**